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TO: Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

DATE: March 14, 2022

RE: Testimony on Raised Bill# SB 367: ***AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS AND VAPOR PRODUCTS***

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Central Connecticut Health District (CCHD). Our agency has been serving nearly 100,000 people in the four member towns, Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill, and Wethersfield, since 1996.

We strongly support prohibiting the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Connecticut. The history of Juul and the explosion of vaping among youth and adults is well known. As well as the fact that their appeal continues to be driven by the availability of flavors from Strawberry Killer Kustard and Milk of the Poppy to more traditional menthol. Just as menthol was originally added to traditional cigarettes to lessen the caustic flavor of smoked tobacco to entice new smokers, so too were flavors used to entice a new generation to nicotine use with Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and vaping products. In 2018 vaping was labelled an epidemic. ENDS use continues to increase in youth and young adults.

A quick review of the CDC Connecticut Youth Risk Factor Survey data from 2019 makes the case for why we must act now. Almost half (44.8%) of all high school students had tried vaping; 1 in 5 ninth graders and 57% of seniors. Almost a third (28.7%) were current users of some tobacco product; about 1 in 5 freshmen and a third (36.4%) of seniors. More alarming, 4% of freshman and 13% of seniors reported vaping six or more times a day! And 11% reported they had done so on school property.

Equally alarming, only one third reported being asked for proof of age when purchasing tobacco products in a store. Hopefully, raising the age to 21 has had an impact on this issue.

In January 2020, the FDA restricted some flavors in cartridge based e-cigarettes, but exempted menthol-flavored e-cigarettes and left flavored e-liquids and disposable e-cigarettes widely available in numerous



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flavors. By May 2020 menthol-flavored products accounted for more than half of total e-cigarette sales.

The industry may continue to lobby to retain at least menthol flavor since it have been part of the traditional cigarette market for so long. But it is time to ban all flavors with no exceptions.

We have kept up with our neighboring states in regard to tobacco Taxation levels. And taxation is one of the few high marks that the Lung Association consistently gives Connecticut for our response to the tobacco problem.

Now it is time to join them on the flavor ban issue. Massachusetts has banned all flavored tobacco products including ENDS. New Jersey, New York, and Rhode Island banned all flavored ENDS. We need to do this for our children and grandchildren Thank you.

Sincerely,

Charles K. Brown Jr., MPH

Board Secretary/Treasurer and District Director of Health